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Message Text

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45
ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9405
INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L 2511

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, KS
SUBJ: SOME ROK PAPERS UNDERLINE DISTINCTION BETWEEN
KOREA AND INDOCHINA

REF SEOUL 2475

1. IN FURTHER REACTION TO PRESIDENT FORD'S FOREIGN
POLICY SPEECH (REFTEL), ROK WEEKEND PRESS FOCUSED
INCREASINGLY ON DISTINCTION BETWEEN KOREA AND INDOCHINA.
CHUNGANG ILBO OBSERVED THAT ROK AND OTHER ASIAN COUNTRIES
HAD HAD DOUBTS ABOUT US INTENTIONS TO MAINTAIN ITS
COMMITMENTS, WITH OTHERS RESPONDING BY CONSIDERING
DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH PEKING AND ROK BY DECLARING
"ANOTHER WARTIME SITUATION." NOW PRESIDENTS'S SPEECH
HAS SHOWN THAT SECURITY OF KOREA AND JAPAN IS CONSISTNNT
WITH US NATIONALINTERESTS, WHEREAS INDOCHINA IS "NOT
INDISPENSABLE" TO USG. MOREOVER, PAPER SAID, US DID
NOT PROMISE GVN THAT IT WOULD GET INVOLVED AGAIN IN
INDOCHINA, WHICH IS THE "MAJOR DIFFERENCE" BETWEEN US
SECURITY COMMITMENTS TO SVN AND ROK.

2. TONGA ILBO EXPLORED DIFFERENCES FURTHER, POINTING
OUT THAT ROK SOLDIERS ARE NOT CORRUPT, US IS SINCERE
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IN KOREAN COMMITMENT, BALANCE OF POWER IN NORTHEAST

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ASIA IS STABLE, ANTI-COMMUNIST SPIRIT OF PEOPLE IS STRONG, ALL IN CONTRAST TO SVN. UNLESS NORTH KOREA MISCALCULATES, WHICH TONGA THINKS UNLIKELY, INDOCHINESE SITUATION BEARS NO DIRECT RELATION TO ROK NATIONAL SECURITY. UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES, PAPER FINDS IT REGRETTABLE THAT RULING PARTY HAS SUGGESTED THAT A STATE OF WAR EXISTS IN ROK, BECAUSE ROK CURRENTLY DOES NOT HAVE HOSTILE RELATIONS WITH ANY COUNTRY.

3. ON INDOCHINA SITUATION ITSELF, MOST PAPERS CONTINUE TO TAKE PESSIMISTIC OUTLOOK ON GVN CHANCES OF SURVIVAL EVEN IN EVENT CONGRESS GRANTS PRESIDENT'S REQUEST. SEMI-OFFICIAL KYONGHYANG SHINMUN SAW PRESIDENT'S SPEECH AS AN ANSWERTO SKEPTICS BUT NOT A SUFFICIENT ONE. CHOSUN ILBO, IN EDITORIAL ENTITLED "SOUTH VIETNAM SHOULD BE DEFENDED BY ALL MEANSPOSSIBLE," SAID THAT ECONOMIC AND HUMANITARIAN AID ARE NOT ENOUGH -- US MILITARY PRESENCE IS VITALLY IMPORTANT. IN CONTRAST TO VIEW OF MOST OTHER NON-GOVERNMENT PAPERS, CHOSUN ILBO HAS CONTINUED TO WARN THAT IF SVN FALLS "NO ONE WILL TRUST US DEFENSE COMMITMENT TO ROK."

4. COMMENT: THE LINE THAT KOREAN AND INDOCHINESE SITUATIONS ARE DIFFERENT IS ONE THAT WE HAVE BEEN TAKING IN OUR CONVERSATIONS WITH GOVERNMENT, OPPOSITION, AND PRESS CONTACTS IN AN EFFORT TO COUNTER THE APPREHENSION STIMULATED IN ALL QUARTERS BY SOUTHEST ASIAN DEVELOPMENTS. WE ARE UNAWARE SO FAR THAT THIS VIEW HAS TAKEN HOLD AMONG ROKG OFFICIALS, BUT THE FACT THAT IT IS NOW BEING AIRED IN THE PRESS IS AN ENCOURAGING SIGN.
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